

NCAA Tournament Bid

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/sports/college/2014/08/06/des-moines-bids-to-host-ncaa-mens-basketball-tournament/13680521/>

The city of Des Moines is hoping the third time is a charm in its chase to host the NCAA men's basketball tournament — and is illustrating some added cha-ching to nudge the charm process along.

The Des Moines Area Sports Commission submitted a bid Wednesday to host the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament in 2016, '17 and '18.

The city, which partnered with Iowa State and Global Spectrum, is making a run at the second and third rounds of March Madness, one of the most watched and coveted sporting events in the United States.

Dan Houston, president of retirement, insurance and financial services for Principal Financial Group, was selected as honorary chairperson for the local organizing committee. Houston gathered 30 letters of corporate support for the bid from every major employer in the metro area.

That show of business force is coupled with ongoing talks to build a new hotel adjacent to Wells Fargo Arena.

"This is really a full-court press to bring the NCAA men's basketball tournament to Des Moines," Houston said. "I have no doubt with my conversations with employers, they will step up and ensure the tournament is successful in all measures."

Representatives of the Greater Des Moines Convention and Visitors Bureau, Iowa Events Center and Greater Des Moines Partnership also made a trip to NCAA's Indianapolis headquarters in April to identify ways to raise its bid profile — financially and in all other ways.

Des Moines has hosted five NCAA events the past six years, including the highly successful Division I wrestling championships in March 2013 that generated an estimated \$15 million in economic impact.

"The NCAA folks are aware of the renovations to all the downtown hotels and our history with NCAA championships," said Greg Edwards, president and CEO of the Des Moines convention and visitors group. "We think the success of the wrestling championships can give us an edge, too."

Des Moines has hosted NCAA women's basketball, as well as three years of the outdoor track and field championships. The city also will be the site of the regional round of the Division I women's volleyball championships in December 2015.

Edwards declined to discuss other incentives in the bid because of the competitive and continuing selection process.

"We tweaked some things and added some bells and whistles (from past NCAA basketball bids)," he said.

Iowa State, which owns the state's longest current NCAA basketball streak, is the university sponsoring the bid. The Cyclones have appeared in each of the last three tournaments — winning at least one game each of those years.

"The excitement for college basketball in the state of Iowa — and at Iowa State University in particular — is at an all-time high," Iowa State athletic director Jamie Pollard said in a news release.

Houston, the honorary chairperson of the local organizing committee, said proof of such comprehensive backing from the business community could sway favor to Des Moines.

"This is the first time I can remember corporations weighing in, in a material way, saying we want to make this happen," he said.

Landing the NCAA men's tournament would soften the blow Des Moines suffered in December, when it found out bid attempts had failed for NCAA women's basketball, the Final Four round of women's volleyball and NCAA wrestling championships from 2015-18.

Edwards said the NCAA is scheduled to analyze men's basketball bids in November. He expects the city to find out its big-stage hoops fate in December.

Houston said this group of organizers is pushing harder than ever before to land the tournament.

"It's time to get Division I basketball here," he said.